



Press Clipping Article

Title: Some tobacco barns being converted to other uses

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Lead:

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Many Casey County producers are already in the goat business and will convert the tall barns used to hang tobacco for raising goats, while others will be used for storage of forage and farm machinery, area extension agricultural agents said.

Steve Heightchew, Casey agricultural agent, said the goat industry, including, meat, dairy and pigmy goats, is on the rise in his county where many farmers will stop tobacco production. Some people have already converted their barns.

Since a lot of growers will continue their burley production in Boyle County, Jerry Little, county ag agent, has not seen a lot of changes in barns.

Hay storage and cattle handling facilities will be the main uses, he thinks.

"Setting up cattle working facilities will make working cattle better in the wet weather," he said.

Farmers are in the "wait and see" stage," said Little. "They want to see how it goes this year, and if we have a good season, we may see a lot more tobacco grown.

"There is nothing going to take the place of tobacco."

Some farmers are expanding their cattle herds, he said, "but I don't know of any people beating down the door to grow vegetables."

Other agents say the same for their counties.

"About all you can do with a tobacco barn is to convert it into hay storage or cattle handling facilities," said Mike Carter, agricultural agent in Garrard County.

However, more than half the Garrard producers will continue to raise burley, he said.

Carter said some farmers have not decided if they want to have a tobacco crop this year. "No one wants to make a major investment yet," he said.

Most of those who have ceased to produce tobacco have converted barns into storage units for hay, he said.

Carter thinks that tobacco sticks might be more of a novelty than an old barn.

"I think over time, tobacco sticks will become in great demand for arts and crafts. Clever people use them for picket fences and walking sticks. I think the relics will be something to see (when people give up tobacco production)," Carter said.

But for now, farmers who have tobacco crops will continue to buy sticks for drying the Kentucky burley.

Dan Grigson, ag agent for Lincoln County, said half the farmers in his county will not give up their tobacco crop. Those who have decided to go out of the burley business have modified their barns.

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